

## RACISTS STOP ROMA GATHERING

Police in the UK have received an Expulsion Order from Home Secretary Jack Straw giving them powers to expell all Roma visiting the village of Horsmonden (between 7th and 11th September) for the traditional Horse Fair, held there for 300 years.

This gathering, attended last year by many thousands, is the most important social and cultural event of the Romani people in the South of England, comparable to the great Appleby Fair in the North of England. It is our heritage, and if it is destroyed we will lose a vital part of our cultural life. Horses, of course are less important today, but this is a gathering of our people, a festive occasion when there are normally many stalls selling Romani products and ceramics.

Now, the police have obtained special powers under the relatively new Criminal Justice Act which make it an offence for us to assembly on the village Green. Road blocks will be set up on all roads (from 7th September) to prevent Roma entering the village.

### WE HAVE ONE HOPE

LORD LESTER, QC, Chair of the European Roma Rights Centre, whose home at Herne Hill is less than 25 miles from Horsmonden is keen to help and has already been briefed (you may contact Martin, Clerk to his Chambers on 0044 2075831770) by our solicitors, Community Law Partnership, Angus Murdock and Christopher Johnson (Ruskin Chambers, 191 Coporation Street, Birmingham B4 6RP, tel: 0044 121 685 8595 or mobile tel: 0044 (0) 468 316755, FAX 0044 (0) 121 236 5121.)

Lord Lester may be willing to take the case pro bono, however the estimate for costs are £140 court fees (which the Romani Council will pay), and £3,000 (\$4,500) total for preparation and barristers fees. In addition, if we lose the case we may incure opposition costs of up to £5,000.

The Application for a Judicial Review, which will involve a Judge considering whether it was proper in law for Home Secretary, Jack Straw, to consent to the Order, should be made to the High Court in London on Monday or Tuesday (4th or 5th September (but can possibly be made late as Wednesday or Thursday, 6th or 7th September - the Order and the blockage of the village will go into force like a military operation on Thursday the 7th September at 18,00 hours.